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By Colleen Dugan — The Capital

Assistant Chief Deputy Clerk of the Court John B. Wilkerson Jr. receives a citation from Sheriff Ronald Bateman yesterday at the Circuit Courthouse. Mr. Wilkerson has worked at the courthouse more than 50 years.

'Legacy player' keeps going

Worked more than 50 years with court clerk's office

By SCOTT DAUGHERTY
Staff Writer

In 1958, two judges were sitting on the county's Circuit Court bench, the court was issuing handwritten payroll checks and John B. Wilkerson Jr. was just starting with the Clerk of the Court's office.

Fifty years later, almost everything has changed, except for Mr. Wilkerson.

Mr. Wilkerson, 74, of Tracys Landing was honored yesterday for more than 50 years of service with the office.

"It doesn't seem like that long," said Mr. Wilkerson, who has worked part time for the past decade and

has no plans to quit. "I enjoy it. If I hadn't enjoyed it I wouldn't have stuck around so long."

Clerk of the Circuit Court Robert P. Duckworth praised Mr. Wilkerson as a "legacy player" during a surprise party at the court house. He noted Mr. Wilkerson's dedication, modesty and ability to lead by example.

"He's probably the most knowledgeable clerk of the court employee in the state of Maryland," he said, pointing out how Mr. Wilkerson has served under 10 governors and 10 clerks. "I'm just proud and honored to stand here in his shadow."

Similar kind words were voiced by

dozens of other court house staffers who attended the party.

Mr. Wilkerson received citations from Gov. Martin O'Malley and Chief Judge Robert M. Bell commending him for his loyal service. Sheriff Ronald Bateman even made Mr. Wilkerson an honorary deputy, noting that was the one office in the courthouse where he hadn't worked.

Mr. Wilkerson, who has served as an assistant chief deputy clerk of the court for more than 20 years, said he didn't plan on sticking around for so long. Despite two years of business school and two years in the Army, the son of a south county tobacco

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farmer was having a hard time finding work in 1958 when he interviewed with then-Clerk of the Circuit Court George T. Cromwell.

"I was just looking for a job ... and he gave me a job," he said.

The job, which was in the recording office, paid \$4,160 a year.

Mr. Wilkerson transferred to the licensing office after a couple years. He eventually moved

to the accounting office, which put him in contact with almost every facet of the courthouse.

"He's touched every office," said Mr. Duckworth.

Mr. Wilkerson currently audits the courthouse books, compiling reports and generally keeping track of the millions of dollars that come through the Circuit Court every year. He also officiates weddings at the courthouse.

Mr. Wilkerson noted how the courthouse has changed since he started in 1958. Back then, the clerks office had only 30 to 40 employees, all of the different offices shared a single room

in the old courthouse, and all payments to the court were handled by hand.

"Everything was done manually," he said.

Today, the clerk's office has more than 110 employees, citizens can review court records online and the books are all done on computers. There are now 11 Circuit Court judges in the county.

"It's just amazing how much the clerk's office has expanded; how much the county has expanded," he said.

Mr. Duckworth added that his staff also is younger than past clerk's offices.

"Very few people come here today and look at this place as where they will stay for 30 to 50 years," he said, estimating most move on within six years.

Mr. Wilkerson, the father of three and grandfather of six, offered the next generation of court clerks the following advise:

"Just do your work and try to get along with people," he said. "That is what I have done over the years."

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